



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

## **Administrative Policies and Procedures: 4.11**

---

**Subject: Inappropriate Employee/Child/Youth/Relative Relationships**

Supersedes: DCS 4.11, 02/01/98

**Local Policy: No**

**Local Procedures: No**

**Training Required: No**

**Approved by:**

**Effective date: 02/01/98**

**Revision date: 02/01/02**

### **Application**

To All Department of Children's Services Employees

**Authority:** TCA 37-5-106, 4-3-2603, 4-3-2606, 39-16-402

### **Policy**

Relationships between Department of Children's Services employees and child/youth or families in the department's care/custody shall only be of a professional nature. All children/youth or their relatives shall be treated in a caring non-discriminatory manner.

### **Procedures**

#### **A. Employee conduct**

1. Employees must conduct themselves in a firm, non-offensive and professional manner when interacting with children/youth or their relatives.
2. It is the duty of each employee to correct all children/youth observed in violation of rules and regulations in a fair, consistent, and impartial manner.
3. Conversations with children/youth are limited to those necessary as part of the employee's duties as related to case management, counseling, conduct, discipline, rules and regulations. Child/youth questions that cannot be answered shall be referred to the immediate supervisor.

**B. Inappropriate relationships**

1. Social relationships are prohibited, including but not limited to emotional or romantic attachments with child/youth. Social relationships are also prohibited with relatives; family and/or clearly identifiable close associates of the child/youth.
2. When an employee is related in any way to a child/youth and his/her relatives, the employee will report this fact in writing to the facility administrator/regional administrator/director upon employment or when the relationship is established.
3. An employee may not trade or barter with children/youth or their relatives except as outlined in policy, nor shall an employee carry, mail, pass contraband in or out of any DCS facility.
4. An employee may not donate items to child/youth without prior written approval of the facility administrator/regional administrator/director.
5. Should an employee have knowledge of any employee engaged in such trafficking, it is the employee's duty to report such information to his/her supervisor. Any attempt by a child/youth to use relatives, family and/or clearly identifiable close associates in an effort to circumvent this policy must be brought to the attention of the supervisor.
6. Visitation of child/youth or their relatives at an employee's home, for social or other functions, is strictly prohibited without prior written approval of the facility administrator/regional administrator/director.
7. The facility administrator/ director must approve in advance any financial transactions permitted between child/youth, employees and child/youth or volunteers and child/youth.
8. An employee may not utilize any child/youth for labor, concerning any personal issue, either paid or unpaid. Such utilization will be considered a violation of state law and will be grounds for termination for gross misconduct. Youth should only be utilized to perform tasks that are part of an approved DCS facility program, approved vocational program, or an approved work program.
9. Exchange of correspondence is strictly forbidden, except for that necessary as part of an employee's duties.  
(Example: *Children Services case managers routinely correspond with child/youth/families, however, copies of all correspondence or documentation to the case recordings regarding the communication must be maintained in the*

*child/youth case file.)*

10. If an employee of the department becomes emotionally involved with a child/youth or their relatives to the extent that a romantic attachment develops, the employee will be asked to resign his/her position. If the employee fails to resign, the employee will be separated from state service.
11. Inappropriate personal phone communication with either children/youth or their relatives is strictly prohibited. Any such contacts/correspondence must be immediately reported to the supervisor of the facility or office.

**C. Policy violation**

Employees who violate this policy, or an employee who fails to immediately report a violation of this policy by himself/herself or another employee may be subject to immediate disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Forms**

None

**Collateral Documents**

*None*

**Standards**

3-JCRF-1B-17

3-JTS-1B-21